

**National Education Association  
Interview with Dale Lestina  
Conducted on May 5, 2017 by Vakil Smallen**

**VS:** It is Friday, May 5th, 2017. This is Vakil Smallen, and I'm here with Dale Lestina and his wife Bonita to talk about his time when he was working at the NEA. As I mentioned previously, this recording is going to be made available to the public, transcriptions of it will be made available to the public, and if at any point you feel like there's a story you'd like to share that I haven't brought up here –

**DL:** I might have one or two.

**VS:** Sure. I guess to start with, can you tell me a little bit about your background before you started working with the NEA?

**DL:** I was a physics teacher at Fargo, North Dakota, and football/wrestling coach, and I got into this business on bargaining contracts. I started teaching in 1958 to roughly 1966, and I left Fargo to become the manager of the field operation for the North Dakota Education Association. What got me into the Association business is in those days all the teachers had individual contracts, and so you could have a person teaching social studies and next door somebody doing exactly the same thing and having considerable different contracts as to how much they were paid.

It was pretty much an operation where if the personnel manager thought that he could get somebody for less, they got him for less, and so therefore they'd (indiscernible 00:02:06)

a bit, and they would be for the rest of their career at a lesser salary schedule. That didn't seem right to me and a few others, so I became president of the Fargo Education Association, and make a long story short, we put all the contracts in an envelope and said to the school board no one will sign. There were a few that were very leery about this whole situation, and I didn't have any contracts that weren't in the package to begin with.

And so that resulted in the first master contract in that area. There was just one for Fargo, one for Denver, Allerton Barnes, and John Chase in Omaha, and then as time went on the three of us had a kind of a dog and pony show where we would go to other larger associations and say, "Well, here's what we did. Maybe it would help you."

**VS:** When you say the three of us?

**DL:** John Chase, Allerton Barnes and myself. Allerton Barnes has since passed away. Allerton Barnes became the executive director of the Fairfax County Education Association, coming from Denver. John Chase went into administration for Omaha and I've lost track of him over the years.

The North Dakota Education Association then picked me up, and I thought, hey, this might be fun. It can do a lot of good for a lot of people. And I was with the North Dakota Education Association as their director of field services for just one year, and then NEA picked me up largely because of Ralph Flynn. Ralph Flynn was I believe the

assistant director of NEA's field services under Gary Watts, and he interviewed me and said that he'd be very interested if I could be interested in joining the NEA, so I did, with the North Dakota Education Association. It's a small operation. I am a former director of the AP from North Dakota, he was the PR guy, and we would just go from association to association. And because Palmer knew the ins and outs of the communications hierarchy, he'd be sitting in the back seat of my car typing up the story and when we would get to the next place he had the contacts to get it in, and so we were just going from place to place on really collective bargaining agreements or grievances that teachers had with their school boards, et cetera.

So, I was on the road a lot. Then I did join the National Education Association, and to begin with we worked out of their St. Paul regional office. A gentleman from New Jersey by the name of Jim Connerton was the director of that office in St. Paul, which no longer exists.

I would say right here emphatically that the National Education Association is an organization with a heart. It is a tremendous organization, and as we go along here it is not without its own difficulties, internal problems and warts, but by and large you'd have to go a long ways to find an organization as good as this one. I have nothing but praise for what has been done. As time has gone on it appears as though, from the outside now looking in, what the public is hearing about the NEA seems to have dropped off, and I'll give you my take on what caused that.

To start with, with the NEA, I did the grievances and arbitration training for the UniServ staff, which I know you know about. That UniServ staff was really the creation, and the gentleman behind that was Ken Melley, the idea being to have a professional staff person for every 1,500 of our members. The NEA members are scattered across the United States just like the population is, and therefore, the 435 members of Congress. There's, round numbers, 5,000 teachers in that particular congressional district, and teachers who are used to picking up a piece of paper, being able to read directions and that kind of thing and follow through, which is a tremendous advantage especially when one is dealing with the legislative and political side of the NEA.

So, in a relatively short time I became a lobbyist, and I was the chief lobbyist for the National Education Association. Where you might want to explore further, I would say one of my highest and best successes was the Department of Education. I had the lead to lobby for that. We had a coalition of National Education organizations all the way from the administrators' groups, the principals' groups, the superintendents, and the NEA opposition from the AFT, which really, AFT and the NEA are kind of like Ford and Chevrolet; they're both competing for the same market.

**VS:** AFT was opposed to part of the changes?

**DL:** AFT was definitely opposed. The AFL-CIO was definitely opposed. The AFL-CIO was

definitely opposed primarily because the AFT was a part of the AFL-CIO and, as they would put, it brothers helping brothers, and it became quite a battle. We had forty-four separate floor votes on the House. The Senate was not all that difficult to get through. It was hard, but we got it passed in the Senate first. In the House it was a big battle, and if you can think of the members of Congress in those days like a big bell-shaped curve, then you got the real liberals and the real conservatives, but by and large the center is more like you think when you grade on the curve.

The battle predominantly was the larger eastern cities were AFT, and the larger western cities were NEA. There are exceptions to that, but pretty much that's the way things would line up. The NEA had pretty much the middle-size cities and the rural areas, and it was a battle to capture that middle ground. And it was my job to count the votes, and that's where the UniServ staff came in, because we were able to keep in contact with those members of Congress who were on the fence, undecided, and we were able to bring in teachers from the classroom to sit down with those members of Congress and go over the reasons why the National Education Association and teachers and students of America would benefit by a Department of Education.

Because up until that time, the education was in with health and welfare, and the little E – HEW, it was called – and the little E was caught in the middle. And when you tried to deal with someone who knew something about education programs and the actual problems that were going on in the classroom, they didn't know. And if you'd start

pressing things they'd pass you on to somebody else and somebody else, and it was kind of like hitting a pillow: nothing; no real accountability for education, which is where those members of Congress, especially from the southeast and states' rights issues, that's the way they wanted it. There was no control or any influence in the federal government over what we do in our schools.

Well, to make a long story short, and then I can get into some specific stories about individual members of Congress if you like, we had forty-four separate floor votes on the floor of the House, and in those days that was a huge number. We didn't win any of those votes by more than four votes, many by just one, and you lose any one of those and you've lost. And so people on the outside would tell me it was kind of like two big sumo wrestlers, they clash and push for the edge of the mat and that kind of thing and back off, and then there you go again. That's kind of what it was like.

Speaker of the House at that time was Tip O'Neill, and when he'd view these clashes going on and so forth, he'd call me aside and he'd haul me into his office and he'd say, "Son, the votes aren't there. I'm going to take this bill off the floor." And I would say, "Mr. Speaker, it's going to be close but the votes are there." And he would look at me and say, "Son, I've been doing this a long time, and I experienced the way things are going out there on the floor. You don't have the votes you think you have." That happened four times.

Now generally, when a bill is pulled like that, that's a death knell, but we were able to get it back and push and so forth, and finally we did get it passed I think with one or two votes. It had already passed the Senate. Then we had a little conference report. You know, before the House and Senate there's a few differences to iron out. And the trick really on the lobbying end is to be there when the decisions are being made. That means when the flag is over the House and/or the Senate, you are there. And where our opposition would cede an advantage during those times is that when it gets to be about five, six o'clock, they'd go home. When the decisions were being made they weren't there. So in those days, or many times, I would get back to the NEA at eleven, eleven-thirty in the evening and so forth, and of course it was all dark, pick my stuff and come on home and get up the next morning and go again.

Now, we did get the Department of Education, but I would have to say that once you win a narrow victory we will be at it defending it for at least the next three to four Congresses, because the opposition will have since pled and they will have sensed that this was so close that if they had just did this or that a little differently they would have defeated this. So that's what we had to do. We had to keep on fighting to defend it.

And it's an interesting situation, that the first annual celebration of the department, and from then on to five years and ten years, the secretaries of education – I'm trying to think now, a man that was appointed by Reagan simply to destroy it from the inside. He tried hard but he wasn't able to do it. Over time, with members of Congress, the real key that I

had was actually going to their districts during election time and campaigning and assisting and helping them in building a friendship. There were members of Congress that had wound up initially opposing that became good personal friends. I have pictures of them up in my office upstairs. By and large, all people are people, and once you get to know them and learn their verbal skills, learn their body language, be able to observe and build a trust in that on a lobbyist, you absolutely can never get caught in any falsehoods or trying to shade something in a way, that they already have suspicion that what you are, you're a paid hand to represent the members of your organization and no matter what, that's what you're here for, is to get over that perception of who you are and what you do deal with.

I'll come back to specifics on that if you wish. There are some interesting stories. For the Elementary-Secondary Act, which for many years now has not been reauthorized, it just bumps along, I had the reauthorization of that for five times. Each time it's a five-year period of time that it's in effect, and then you do it again, and that goes all the way from Title VII all the way through Title IX, and all those different titles was my responsibility. I'm very pleased, the way in which that went.

Another thing that I'm very pleased with is Organizations Concerned About Rural Education. The reason there is a Department of Education, by and large, is capturing rural America and the rural members of Congress, and being able to show the advantages of having a federal voice for elementary, secondary and higher education. And



Organizations Concerned About Rural Education is an organization of organizations that represent rural interests in America, from the grain elevators to the dairy farmers to the sugar beet growers, to those that provide the petroleum and gas for the farmers and all that, and agribusiness, which is another very, very big business. So we got involved a lot then with the Department of Agriculture and were able to look at the condition of the school buildings in rural America, which are atrocious.

I've got on tape upstairs pictures of buildings that, especially when you're close to Indian reservations and close to communities of lesser means – I'll relate a story here to you now. I'm going to talk about Flint, Michigan and Congressman Dale Kildee, our congressman from there. He would say this, something along – I'll paraphrase him: "You know, I have jails in my district where the judge says, 'You can't put prisoners in there. It's just not human. It's just not right.' And then you'll slap the table really hard and you'll say, 'But I've got schools in my district where it's worse than that. Little children are going in those doors each day and coming back out and no one really seems to care. So long as something is happening in there that – and the kids are exposed to broken windows, doors that don't lock, and ceiling tiles that are out, asbestos being exposed and so forth. It's just not right.'"

Well, that is the centerpiece of Organizations Concerned About Rural Education, and the centerpiece was the infrastructure of the buildings and what they are about, not just in rural America, because you have it big time in urban America as well.

**VS:** When did that organization start? And you were, if I recall, the president.

**DL:** I was the president of it. I would say I started being president of that in the mid-nineties, early nineties, and I was president of it after I retired. It still is going, still functions, and where it gets its money is from grants from organizations like NEA, (indiscernible 00:23:36), the railroad companies and so forth, all of which are involved in agribusiness. So that's where it gets its funding.

**VS:** Do you know when it was first founded?

**DL:** No. That predates me. It's been around a long time, but what it was was an organization predominantly of rural superintendents. And what they did is they had a big meeting once a year, an annual meeting where they would have speakers and that kind of thing. We moved away from that more into the organizational end where you actually are dealing with people on the ground and teachers who are involved with this kind of situation, and gives it a bit more clout. It's never been as strong as the NEA. Once you have an organization that is mostly an organization of organizations, you've got a lot of chiefs, and many of those chiefs don't have very many Indians. And so, there on paper, it looks good.

Now back to the NEA. When I first started with the NEA it was a house divided against

itself. You had the local education associations –

**VS:** Sorry to interrupt here. Sixty-eight? Is that when you started working at the NEA?

**DL:** Sixty-seven, '68.

**VS:** And I just want to step back a minute because I do want to revisit a couple of things that we talked about before we get too far ahead and I forget them. Do you mind just briefly talking a little bit about that first contract at the Fargo Education Association when you put everything in the envelopes? You made it sound as if you were one of the first organizations in the country that was doing this, and so I imagine–

**DL:** In the Midwest, in that area. There weren't any master contracts from Colorado, to Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, on up the Dakotas, Montana; they just didn't exist.

**VS:** So can you talk a little bit maybe about the impetus of what led you and your organization to be one of those ones that said we're going to do this. Was it simply just yourself, was there an outside influence?

**DL:** No, there wasn't an outside influence other than a little from the NEA. The North Dakota Education Association at that time was an observer of the situation. It was myself and maybe six of the, really, men teachers of the Fargo Education Association who were

liberal leaning, saying this isn't right. You've got to treat people equally. At least that's the way things ought to be. I mean it says when you recite the Pledge of Allegiance and you've got justice for all and all that kind of thing, and it rings kind of hollow when you get right to the grass roots of how that actually gets displayed and utilized.

We went to bat for it, not really knowing about Denver and Omaha, but as time went on we learned about them, and what we got out of that was a master contract that had a grievance processing mechanism and a salary schedule, and one that was based on years of experience and education levels of attainment. So we had something to measure on rather than just Kentucky windage of a personnel director interviewing a person and figuring, well, I guess I can get this person for X. And by and large, the women teachers were way down the pipe as far as salary is concerned. Men teachers the less, while there were problems within the men teachers as well. That just wasn't right.

And so we corrected that, and with that we built then a really strong organization. Now, I've been away from there for quite some time and organizations go through ebb and flow, and I don't know where this one is at this time. But like in lobbying or anything, perceived power is power, and if you are able to take on the establishment and win, what comes from that is a perception that you've got power, maybe even more power than you actually do. Same as in the lobbying end and so forth, that it's perceived you've got it. But every so often you've got to do something that brings that back to the forefront again, that, oh, yeah, this is not an organization to be trifled with. We need to pay attention to

this organization.

**VS:** So that master contract, is that what brought you to the attention of the NEA? Did they approach you to become the field representative afterwards?

**DL:** Well, they did, but there's an intervening part there. The North Dakota Education Association saw this first and the executive director at that time was Irving Iverson, and Irving Iverson said to me, "I want you on my staff." And I said, "Well, my wife and I both teach." And so he said, "Your wife will have a job in Bismarck. Come to Bismarck."

Well, we talked it over again and with trepidation I think from my wife, maybe not so much, so she went there and we had our first son. Our son came on the way and so then she ceased her teaching there in Bismarck. But it was the work with the North Dakota Education Association and the publicity of what we were doing in the local associations, small ones, and in North Dakota you don't have very many large organizations. You know, you've got 500, 600 teachers, that's a lot. In many places you're dealing with twenty and thirty, that kind of thing. But the publicity that went for that, that's what hooked me then in attention to the NEA, and that's when Ralph Flynn came calling.

**VS:** And when you were with the North Dakota Education Association is when you were traveling around with the guy from the AP.

**DL:** That's right. He was also hired by the North Dakota Education Association. We came on at the same time. I find it interesting looking back in that Iverson, and the assistant executive director's name was Adrian Dunn, saying, "Well, now, we probably can't hang onto the AP man" – his name was Dick Palmer – "very long because he's really going to be in demand. He's really good." Well, I look back now and smile; I was the first guy to go. Dick finished out his career there. Wonderful person, geez. In this business it's like any team. You get a good quarterback and you get a good line up front and great wide receivers and so forth, although those talents are different, when you put it all together you've got a great team. NEA has been, at least in my days, was really good at building a good team of differing kinds of skills that would fit together and operate in the kind of climate that I've described to you.

**VS:** And so when you came to the NEA you mentioned that you rapidly became the chief lobbyist. My understanding is that around that time is when the NEA first kind of decided they were going to jump into the political arena and endorse a public official for the first time in '69, I think. Or not endorse; come out against, I guess, or un-endorse a candidate for Supreme Court, and then endorse a president for the first time in '76. So you must have been there right when that was happening, so were you kind of the pilot/chief lobbyist? Were you the person who stepped into that role, or was there a person there before you?

**DL:** Well, there were people before. A guy by the name of Jim Greene was the manager of the lobbyists, which I became. He was from New Mexico. Stan McFarland was the director of government relations at that time. Stan was good at building a team of varying personalities that would fit together, that kind of thing. When I became the manager of the lobbying operation, we were already into the endorsing and so forth. What I would use for that when I was just a lobbyist was I would have my assignments as to who my members of Congress would be, and I would then during their campaigns make sure I was in their campaign, that they would see me there and I'd be working in that campaign. And one of the things that I had in my hip pocket to be able to use was working with the state associations and doing teacher phone banks for the member that we were endorsing and going with and for.

So I was kind of – like at the second wave, which was a bigger wave – you talked about the kind of little forays that they were doing, and so the decision was then made, now we're going to go. It's interesting because as an organization grows and its power grows, you've got people in the organization who are dedicated to the cause and for teachers and so forth. And then when you start building a team and you bring in people who don't have much if anything direct experience in the classroom and they've grown up in a different professional development, I would say it's cut and slice for myself, and for myself to move up in the organization.

When NEA would get that, and they've had that where people who were in a position to

make decisions but unfortunately didn't know much or (indiscernible 00:35:59) from siccum as to what actually happens in a classroom. They don't know that, but they think they do because they went to school at one time. And so that transfers over into, well, hell, I know all about all this. So they're making decisions about stuff that they think they know but it's obvious that they don't. But when you tell them, or say, hey, wait a minute, it's almost insubordinate. And so you get an organization that has those kinds of things happen within it, but NEA is big enough and strong enough that it was able to overcome those kinds of things anyway.

Another example of when the big push came for moving females ahead of white guys, and racial intermixing and so forth in all levels of management kind of thing, that, in putting people into those positions who are of the ilk that I just described to you is an internal impediment for the organization to do its job for its members. Many of these people never were members of the organization, if you get my drift. That kind of gives you a flavor.

Now, talking about building teams, NEA has a great research arm, or they had one, and when I would be working the lobbying end and so forth I'd say here's the kind of thing I need to have to buttress the position that we're taking on the particular piece of legislation, being Title I education. And they would then do the research and arm me with those facts. The public relations end of NEA, they were invaluable. I would be doing thus and so on the Hill and they would then sometimes come along and observe it,



sometimes afterwards sit down and I would go over it with them and they would be putting out the PR on it.

In the *Washington Post*, of course times have changed now, but in the *Washington Post* the NEA almost always had articles about what it was doing and the positions that it was taking. You don't see that anymore. Now, I don't know. I'm not a big fan of Facebook and that kind of thing. I'm sure that it's probably there. But I read the *Washington Post*, as you can see here, yet today. My guess is is the individuals you've talked with so far in your interviewing, they're reading the *Washington Post*, and they might also be dealing with Facebook and other computerized programs. And it's great. You've got to have it these days, but just remember whatever you put on there is there.

I'll take it one more step on the lobbying end. Toward the end, and even now, in the last few years, I'd go up for Organizations Concerned About Rural Education, and go through the halls and the office buildings of the Rayburn House Office Building or the Hart Senate Office Building. It used to be that the lobby, the halls would be full of people. Today you can roll a bowling ball down there and you would hardly hit anyone. It's now all computerized. And to my amazement, when I would meet with members of the staffs, certain members of Congress, it was obvious they didn't even know one another. It was the first time they were meeting each other.

Now, we used to have lunches and dinners together, the Republicans and Democrats and

so forth. I would go to Senator Hatfield's home, Republican, Oregon, and also with Democrats, and there would be bipartisan get-togethers. That doesn't exist anymore. And where I was going with this is, is that the internal people skills of conversation is losing out in that when I watch these staff people in meetings, they're busy on a laptop and missing the verbal skills that are going on around the room and what people are really thinking about, what they're saying and so forth, and that's going to become a lost art. It's well on its way.

**VS:** That's probably true. So, I do want to get into the Department of Education, because I know that's a big thing with the NEA, and the fact that you were so closely involved with it I think is a great chance to go into some of it. But just before that, so that started in, was it '76 when the drive to get it going –

**DL:** Thereabouts, yes. I was going to campaign meeting – I don't know if – you know, an eighty-year-old guy thinking back to that. But yes, you're in the ballpark.

**VS:** Do you recall maybe before that, what was it like being the chief lobbyist early on? NEPAC I think started in '72, sometime like that, so kind of early in the seventies when you step in as the chief lobbyist, the NEA is first attempting to step into the waters of lobbying and all this stuff. Do you recall any stories about early on, learning on the job bits or maybe early successes?

**DL:** Well, one of the big splashes to me, and this was a comfortable splash, a nice warm shower, in that realizing the power that was there to persuade. Most teachers in the classroom, I think without missing my bet, feel like they're very much alone. In my day, the administration or principal would look in through the window and probably jot down some stuff and that was your evaluation. You kind of sank or swam on your skills that you either learned on the job – okay, same here. You assess the situation, and learning that, wow, we can harness the teachers of the United States who are our members and utilize the UniServ system, which Ken Melley was the big drive on, and the political contributions from that, in that, show our members the tremendous upside of making contributions to candidates so that we can elect people who are of the persuasion that education is really worth something, and realizing that, and then melding it and putting it together.

I'll give you a specific example, or vignette. This would be Congressman Natcher from Kentucky. A little background on Natcher. Natcher maintained a skeleton staff, and on aside, I'll say, "Congressman, why don't you have more staff?" He said, "I'm not going to educate folks that later on take me on and take my job. I'll maintain a skeleton staff." He wrote a diary every night to his grandchildren. "Someday," he said, "this will be important to them," and he would write down what happened during that day. All right, now, taking this further, what Natcher was like.

Bill Natcher never ever missed a vote, and it got to the stage where (indiscernible

00:45:43) actually owned him. And that in later in life, when he was on a gurney brought back from the Walter Reed Hospital, laying on a gurney with tubes feeding into his arm, he would have himself wheeled in and he would vote. He was there. He took the responsibility serious. Now, he went home almost every weekend to keep in touch with his organization and his congressional district. As time went on, it was harder for him to do, but nevertheless he really tried hard.

Well, I was in his office and we were talking about the funding for elementary-secondary education. He was the chair of the Subcommittee on Appropriations who had the jurisdiction over that, and he looked kind of worried. I said, "Is there something really bothering you?" He said, "Yes, I called my wife and I can't get an answer. I'm concerned about her." So I said, "Anybody to check on her?" "No, I don't have any family," and so forth, there at the time. And I said, "Well, I can have somebody check on her." "You can?" "Yeah. How about tonight?" And he said, "Well, if you can't get an answer on the phone, my wife keeps all the doors locked," but he said on the back screen door, if you jiggle it just right the hook will pop out. So I call up Ken Campbell, who's a UniServ director, and I call him and say this is the situation, need your help; Ken said, "I'll go right over and see if I can get in." He did, he went right over, jiggled the screen door. His wife was laying alongside the bed, bad way. Got the emergency folks in.

Well, you do those kinds of things for people, you've got a friend for life. Transfer that is lobbying. And this isn't just a single story; there are several like that, people that

actually opposed, and of course they got elected, and then it was my job to – and one of my themes was winners deal with winners. You're a winner, my organization and I am a winner, we'll work together. Let's see where we can find common ground. That would transfer over into a guy like Jim Jones, who was chair of the Budget Committee. There were three people running for that chairmanship: Paul Simon from Illinois, and Obey from Wisconsin, and Jones from Oklahoma. So NEA picks its – and we pick Paul Simon. Paul Simon is a great supporter, so, do I have the votes? The lower person is out. Paul Simon was a lower person; he's out. Well, the next guy is Obey. Obey was a very rough talker. He had all kinds of blue words that he would be using almost all the time. We'll go with him. We did, and lo and behold, Jim Jones beat him. Well, that's two times we were on the other side from Jim Jones, and you've got to work with Jim Jones on the Budget Committee.

Jim Jones had little kids, and he had a residence close to the Capitol, and he had some little puppies for his kids he was keeping in his office. We would talk about puppies and that kind of thing, and I'd help him. I would take them home, I'd help him transfer over to his house. Met his wife Olivia, so forth, we got acquainted, we talked back and forth. And after a while with Jim Jones, pretty good deal.

In the old days people would line up in the hall to get into hearings and that kind of thing. The term lobbyist is standing in the hall, that kind of stuff, waiting for the doors to open. With Jim Jones I didn't have to stand in line. I'd go right around through his office

where I'd be sitting down there waiting for the doors to open up, right in the front part where I could make eye contact and sometimes thumbs up, sometimes thumbs down in an inconspicuous way. Those are examples of the lobbying part. There are many, many cases like that, but I don't want to use up all your tape on stuff like that.

**VS:** Before we get into the Department of Education, talk to me about UniServ and explain for me exactly what UniServ is. I see it everywhere and I know that it's like the local, the state and the NEA kind of all united, but how exactly was it implemented?

**DL:** Well, UniServ, in my recollection, got its genesis from unification of NEA. Earlier in this conversation I said when I started with NEA it was a house divided against itself, and that as a teacher you could belong to your local association or your state and not the local, or the NEA, or two of those and not the third, and they were played off against one another. And that the power structure was such that those that had the power in a given state, especially a large state, would say, well, we don't need the NEA, they're just going to come in here and cause trouble.

I'll give you an example in Texas. When I'd go down to Texas, L. P. Sturgeon was the executive director, and wherever I went in that state he had a staff person or two go along with me. And every night I know they reported back, saying this is what Mr. Lestina did today, so he knew. They lived in concern of someday they would get their paycheck from Washington D.C. and that, that was meddling in what they considered their

business.

Now, to unify meant pulling all of that together, so one of the big pushes was to unify the NEA so that if you're going to join, you join the local, state and national, and it was all one organization. UniServ was a carrot to bring that about, and that the NEA would pick up I think it was a third or more of the salary of these new professionals that would be hired to service their members in that given state. That was the genesis of UniServ.

Now, getting UniServ, they had to be trained, and I've mentioned earlier that my first job with NEA was arbitration, grievance processing, and contract negotiations, which we did a lot of research on the verbal skills of how you counter positions that the person on the other side of the table is taking, in a way, to open doors. Well, UniServ then, those folks that were hired, and if I remember correctly the last state to unify was the state of Ohio, one by one working on this thing, bringing together, unification took place. All right. Therefore, the beginning of UniServ.

The UniServ staff was to assist in bargaining contracts, would assist in grievance processing, and to represent the teachers and to kind of be their hired staff, professional staff just for them. So you can imagine now across the United States, UniServ staff – NEA at that time were over a million members and it grew up to over two million and so forth, and now somewhere between two and three million, I suppose. I don't know. That's a lot of staff, and those staff are available to be able to organize their local

members and to get that staff involved with, then, the election of sympathetic members of Congress, worked well.

Now, it did, as time went on, from my view, begin to atrophy, and it did so because we had what we called contact team members, and those were teachers who were specifically interested in politics and legislation. They were in addition to the UniServ staff. And from time to time what would be happening is that these politically-interested teachers would come to D.C., and by and large in the beginning they went right to their member. They already knew their member because they had worked in their campaign and there was already a personal relationship. As time went on, however, for that first contact team members, they were viewed by some of the hierarchy of the state organization that that's a political pawn, and I can appoint you to be a contact team member and we would get contact team members that didn't know the person they were dealing with, didn't the issues, didn't know the legislative process, and they were interested in going to the Smithsonian and so forth more than doing their job. So that became – now, I don't know where it is or how it is today because I left there in '99, 2000, in that range right there, and retired. But the UniServ, that still exists today.

Now, how it relates in many of the executive directors in states, especially smaller states, now get their check from NEA, and that's all part of the unification, and that's how UniServ got to be – it has tremendous potential, and it really helped with the Department of Education. And the congressional contact team members really were valuable for that.



Where it is today, I don't know. I would assume that it's still around. Have you heard anything?

**VS:** Well, no. On my end, dealing with the historical records, anything after 2000 I'm not actually familiar that much with yet. So you mentioned that the UniServ was very helpful with the Department of Education, was very helpful with being in contact with members of Congress in that area. So as the field representative, were you ever – let's say a local or a state association even, a bargaining agreement breaks down, they go on strike, did you have a direct role in anything like bargaining agreements or anything that ultimately would lead to a strike? Was that part of the job as well?

**DL:** Right. Became more and more part of the UniServ staff, too. Yeah, I was involved with strikes. Strikes are a last resort, and there's never a true winner or loser in a strike. It's who can win more, I guess, and who loses less. But I'll relate an example to you about Keokuk, Iowa. They were bargaining for a master contract and they weren't getting anywhere, and they were getting to be name-calling and bad blood between the school board, the administration, and the Keokuk Education Association. In those days Iowa staff was not very up to speed as to how you deal with a situation like that, so that became one of my assignments.

Well, what transpired is we had a president and a treasurer, secretary, and a vice president, and we started our bargaining. So we weren't getting anywhere, and the

school board got signals in just watching what was transpiring that they were going to jail our leadership. So, quickly, I got backup president, secretaries and so forth. If you know your map on Iowa, it's clear down in the southeast corner, and you've Illinois on one side and Missouri down on the other end, and so playing across state borders here becomes key, in that they did jail our president, Tom Coffey, they did jail the secretary, and she was an elementary school teacher who was about to retire, and the vice president, he was the industrial arts teacher.

And so that was such a different event, and this is where public relations comes in is as to advertise, at that time they had a movie: *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* I don't know if you've ever heard of that. It was a popular movie at the time. And so I went about setting up road signs, "In Keokuk They Jail Teachers, Don't They?" People would drive by and, oh. There got to be (indiscernible 01:01:54) it was just kind of a event that was out of the ordinary that drew people to drive by that jail, and they did. And then we thought about, well, it would be interesting to have a picture of some elementary school children giving cookies to the teacher through the jail window. That hit the paper big, and the school board said, "That's enough, we'll agree. Get your president and officers out of the jail." And I said, "No. You put them in there. They're in there, they'll negotiate with you, but your negotiation will take place in the jail because that's where they are, and they aren't coming out until you go in and see what that's like."

Well, that took about a day or so, and the newspaper was picking up this and the public

relations that goes along with it. And lo and behold, they said, "Okay, we'll go in." And they went into that jail and they negotiated their contract. And now it comes time to ratify the contract the next day, and we go to the big church auditorium where we met on our first vote to go on strike, and now, with the teachers being really in control and feel what that is like, they want more blood. Before they'll sign this contract they want this person to resign from the school board and that person to resign and so forth, and the superintendent to resign and go. Right now they're after them. And then I'm in a position where, as opposed to pushing things forward, whoa, whoa, slow down there now. Well, they did, but not after some tremendous angst.

Well, during this time we had a horrendous thunder storm came up, and the lightning was flashing and the thunder was crashing and so forth, and then when that subsided, we were just subsiding and we were coming down to signing and ratifying the contract. I'll close by this: The president of that organization became UniServ in Wisconsin. The secretary, she retired. The treasurer, as I recall, became the legislative director of the Iowa State Education Association. And here's the hard part: The industrial arts teacher, in a year or so, committed suicide. You've got these kinds of heavy things that go on to people's psyches when you're dealing with this kind of thing with people. And so therefore I say there's never really a true, true, true winner in a strike. For example, we lost a person, that weighed so heavily on him as to what happened. Never would have known it, kind of like you and I sitting here talking. But there you are.

**VS:** So it sounds like you were walking a fine line there, with trying to push the Keokuk people maybe a little bit into standing up, threatening a strike and standing up to the superintendents, and then having to also mediate then when they wanted to fire all the people. Did you find yourself as that, I guess, trying to promote the welfare of the NEA as a whole, for instance as a lobbyist working with members of Congress or whatever, but at the same time maybe you have members in that person's district who, maybe they're making threats that are too big and threatening a relationship that you might have had with a member of Congress? Did you find yourself having to sort of be this mediator because you want the person from that district to be helpful to the NEA, so you have to get the teachers in his district to kind of play along with what you want whether they want it or not?

**DL:** There's two things, and I'll start with this last one, whether they want it or not. I don't think you'll ever get people to do what they have to do to move forward if they don't want it. If they don't want it, you might as well steer away. And then I'll come to the first part of what you talked about is the job, is to get the members to stand up for what they believe in. It's not so much to get them to do that, it is to harbor their own values for them to see that that's what they need to do. Not that I want them to do it, but that they want them to do it.

Now, there's also a trick to how you hold a vote for something like that, and you do what – Jerry Holliman is an old friend of mine and a staffer from Massachusetts – you wire the

crowd. Are you familiar with that? You have your leadership speak first, and then you have people who you know are going to vote right, and you're softening the crowd round in different places. And they raise their hand to speak and you're in a position to call, and that crowd is already salted. And when they pop up – and so it sounds like all over there, there are people who are, wow, I'm going to go on this thing, so that when you get right down to it and you start calling the role in a place like Keokuk and you call off Mrs. Jane Jones and so forth, and people vote, you build a tremendous amount of peer pressure. But if you do that and it backfires on you, you're done. The trick is that they're really convinced this is the only way they can get what is justice, like teachers putting their contracts in an envelope in Fargo, North Dakota.

When you've got people who that's their livelihood, that's how they get their groceries, that's how they have their health bills paid, you put that in an envelope and you're trusting somebody down the hall from you to what's going to happen there, you've got to have pretty doggone good trust. And so it's that kind of trust dealing with a strike, with contract negotiations and with lobbying, that is a must in order to be successful.

**VS:** I'm ready to ask about the Department of Education. So to start with, you said something that surprised me, and if you can shed any light on it. So you mentioned that the AFT was opposed to the creation of the Department of Education.

**DL:** Absolutely.

**VS:** So what would their reason be? Would it not benefit them as well? Why were they opposed?

**DL:** Well, you remember I was saying Ford and Chevrolet? It is a competition for the same clientele, and the winner, whichever you're going to call the win, a win to stop the department or a win to get the department, going to be perceived as having the more clout of the two, so they could defeat it. Well, you can't go up against the AFT. You won't get anywhere. Or if they lose, you can't go up against the NEA. Look at what they did. It's much harder to pass a piece of legislation, much, much, much harder than it is to defeat it.

Now, I'll give you an example. The AFT's chief lobbyist was a guy by the name of Greg Humphrey, and I'm for the NEA. We had strong difference of opinion, but we never had personal difference of opinion. We could talk and discuss and so forth, we could be friendly; we just saw things differently, and we agreed with one another that we did that, that that's the way life would be for us, and it was accepted, so much so that when I retired he was there, shaking hands and so forth, congratulations and that kind of thing.

Now – collect my thoughts. I have a tendency to go off on a tangent there.

**VS:** We were talking about why the AFT opposed the Department of Education. What was

the ideology of theirs behind it?

**DL:** That was the ideology, as far as I could tell. They felt like the Department of Labor, which they saw as their department of education, in essence, as well. And in those days the AFL-CIO took strong stances on education, and they were a party to that. We came down to the final vote in full committee to move on out to the floor. There was a gentleman by the name of Lyle Williams, was a congressman from Youngstown, Ohio, and he was addicted to soap operas. When you'd go to his office to visit with him and so forth, he'd have a soap opera over here going and he'd be glancing over at that as you're talking.

In talking with his chief of staff about the Department of Education and why it was important and that kind of thing, and Youngstown, Ohio is a strong union town, and he said, "You know, my boss sees that we probably ought to have that Department of Education. You'll have his vote, but only on the final vote." Well, okay.

Well, comes time for that final vote, and the AFT has their list, I have my list, and Carl Perkins from Kentucky is the chair of the committee. Carl Perkins is a guy whose teeth were such that he would whistle. Every 'S' he said, there was a whistle to it. The story was whenever a hearing is being held, you could always tell when Carl was chairing because the dogs in town would be up around the office building.

Carl called the roll, and Carl was sure it was going to lose. He went down the roll, finished the Democrats, deal with the Republicans, and when we would have amendments, there were a couple of detrimental amendments and Lyle Williams voted for them. And I remember turning around to UniServ staff guy that was representing that area, I said, "You sure we got this guy?" We went another step, and the next vote he voted wrong. Okay, final passage, and we went down through the final passage, came to Lyle Williams, "Aye," and walked to Greg Humphrey and he just snapped his book together and he walked out of the room, because that was it. We're on to the floor. So it's close. It was close like that all the way through for the Department of Education. There was no stupendous wins at all. Like I said, four votes, forty-four separate floor votes, four is the biggest margin we had, many only one.

That's where the UniServ staff and the congressional contact teams came in very valuable. We could put the teachers from those congressional districts where members of Congress were wavering and put them in what we call the crow's nest, all the way across in the veranda out there, watching their members, seeing how they would vote. And the story was you get members, when they would deal with it they would not want to answer the question, are you going to vote for this or not. And then what I would say when preparing them to go in for the lobby, I'd say, well, just say, "Mr. Congressman, I'm representing teachers in X place in your district and they're going to ask me what you said and I don't know what you said. Are you going to vote for it or not? Tell me, because I've got to tell these folks. And if you say you don't know, well then I'll tell



them you don't know." That generally got us off the time there.

**VS:** I don't know if you have more to talk about the passage of it, or I can skip ahead a little bit.

**DL:** Oh, the actual passage?

**VS:** Yeah, do you have any stories about that?

**DL:** I guess the story that I would have is I carried in my suit vest pocket where each of the 435 members of Congress were. And this document that I had, plus my notes and so forth, was studied very deeply by a guy by the name Richard Smith, from Carnegie Mellon University, did two big research projects on it, saying does lobbying really make a difference or do things just happen anyway? And then he went through with all the complicated formulas and so forth that they use and he spent two years. At night he'd come to my office and he'd go through my files and take notes, and so when I'd come in the next morning he would have everything back just the way I left it. And he concluded that that lobbying really made the difference as to how the department took place and came about, and he got some kind of award or prizes on both of the books that he wrote. Richard Smith, Carnegie Mellon University. I never read one of them or anything like that. I did get to know him real well in that he'd be coming in and if I were lobbying late at night he'd watch for me to walk in the door and then he'd walk in with me, and then

he'd work the night.

The vote, in of itself, I can't say that it was anti-climactical because when you're watching the vote go down and you're watching it display, when you're sitting in the crowd's nest, you can't write down anything. They'll ask you to leave if you do. And what that does is it helps a person tune up his memory. You're looking at 435 members at different times voting in the states and that kind of thing, is to flash in, oh yeah, okay, let's grab that, oh, we didn't get that one, and so forth down the line. So that by the time when they're calling it, you've got a pretty good idea where the soft spots were or what didn't come through. I would say that I can't recall of any vote toward the end that we had wrong.

**VS:** Going back to something you said earlier, you talked about how perception of power is power in an area like lobbying. So this must have been an enormous win for the NEA, and this must have been seen as –

**DL:** Oh, yeah.

**VS:** And so was there a harvest to reap from that? Do feel like there were successes that followed in the years afterwards?

**DL:** Yes.

**VS:** Which would have been tough, though, because Reagan coming in obviously changed things.

**DL:** Yeah, it did. Well, the perception – I'll talk about NEA as an organization and its staff, and you'll harken back to earlier comments that I made. In lobbying, it's not an eight-to-five job. Once that is done and the vote was accomplished, then you've got filings to do, and you've got interpretations of this language, what's it really mean and so forth, and so you've got to sit down with staff and be there while this is happening or they'll interpret what that language means, and if it's not especially clear, you can get screwed but good. Well, I'm there. I go through all of this stuff so when it's all done I go back to the NEA.

I was surprised. NEA was in full party mode. When I walked in there, they were hollering and screaming and dancing, and liquor bottles around and so forth, and holy smokes. That is a great picture to have in mind for different parts of the team and for people who really don't know about what goes on in the lobbying end but they think they do. They were, oh boy, look what we did. And I know from the language and so forth, the sign off, we're really going to have to battle to keep this thing now. But at the time it was like winning the Super Bowl, and each of those people I'm sure felt that they were a party or a part to that.

But for the vast majority, even though they were great team players, there's no perception

of the time and the hours that goes in. They go home and they're home having their dinner at home and so forth, but Congress is still going on many, many hours. That just isn't in their experiences, therefore it doesn't exist. You know, not even thought about.

Yes, then the spinoff from that is, well, NEA has arrived on the scene. NEA is now something to at least consider. And so when we would endorse candidates and those candidates would win, that's great. We'd endorse candidates and they would lose and we got their opponent, then I would have to work with them, and I would come back to, well, you're a winner and so are we, and we'll work together and let's see what we can work out here. Open the book, let's see what we – democracy worked, and we lived with the results of democracy. You're the winner.

**VS:** If I recall, the person that Carter appointed as the first Secretary of Education was someone that the NEA didn't know.

**DL:** That's right.

**VS:** If I remember, that was presented as the NEA felt it was almost like an immediate blow to what they thought they had achieved in the sense of creating the Department of Education; that this person was an unknown. It felt like maybe their agenda wasn't being followed. Am I accurately describing the situation there?

**DL:** You are accurately describing it from those who aren't into the legislative end. Those that are in the political side, you've got the political side which is the campaigns and so forth. Then after that's over you've got the legislative part, and you need to have a good tie back and forth between them. Well, if you figure that that was won because of the political side and it wasn't won because of the legislative side, really it was both. But the legislative side is like the quarterback deciding, well, I'm not going to do that play now because there's the pass right there – bingo. That's the legislative side. The political side lays the groundwork but it doesn't complete the pass.

So the perception of the media and the perception of people on the political side, and the perception of people who know some of the political side but not much about the legislative side, well, fortunately that's the majority of people, and so for us a tremendous win. Legislative, you've got it, you've got to keep it. Kind of like Ben Franklin: You've got a republic; now the trick is to keep it. We had to fight for that for eight years, and here comes Reagan; cut it out.

Another piece is the internal divides between conservatives and liberals. NEA was a liberal organization, probably still is, but you have members who are conservative. And they say, I'm not going to join an organization that takes part of my dues money and does this. And over time that fomented and that grows, and you've got a leadership that has to deal with that, so you give a little here, give a little there. Pretty soon you're looking at more bipartisan approach. Well, bipartisan approach is good in a pragmatic way, but you

keep in mind the liberals is where our butter comes from that spreads on our bread.

What happens with large organizations – you take the AARP. Tremendous big organization. Has its roots in the NEA, by the way. And, say, the National PTA. Big organizations, and they have some clout. The AARP is getting more and more, but they're divided against themselves along these political lines. NEA is somewhat now that. It was beginning to show itself when I left, and I think that's why we have less public relations in the newspaper and so forth. We may have a lot on the Internet, but I don't get that.

So, ask your question now and see if I covered it.

**VS:** Did it feel like the Department of Education, the sort of immediate aftermath of it, did it feel as much of a win?

**DL:** Yes.

**VS:** You talked about the political versus the legislative.

**DL:** That's correct, it did. It was a great win, but it was one of many battles yet to come. And now, the Department of Education of pretty much in place, however the new Secretary of Education now, you've got again somebody in the saddle there who doesn't have the

experience. That was shown over and over again in her hearings; just doesn't even know.

But she's the head, calls the shots.

**VS:** In your memory, is she different – I was far too young to have been there at the time – to William Bennett?

**DL:** Yeah, she was before William Bennett. William Bennett, that's the name I couldn't recall earlier. Bennett was put in by Reagan to dissolve the Department of Education. That was his job.

**VS:** Was that explicit? Was that the understanding of the NEA or was it explicit in his role?

**DL:** Well, you got nothing on paper. What is said behind the scenes and when you observe the actions and so forth, it's pretty clear that's what it was. Now, there are things that are said and things that aren't said, but behind closed doors, and just watching the body language of what's going down, I'm convinced that's what he was there for, but he was unsuccessful. In order to do that – this is early on in the game now, a couple years after we get the Department of Education, and for the next four, two Congresses, you've got members of Congress saying, "I don't mess with the NEA. I saw what they can do," and others that truly believed what we were doing was right.

**VS:** So the eighties come around, and you'd mentioned about how the organization is forced

to be bipartisan, both from below and probably from above as well, since you have to work with Republicans and Democrats. So Reagan comes in, this new conservative movement steps up. Was the NEA kind of pigeonholed into being partisan in issues? Did you feel like you had a fairly equal working relationship with members of both parties within Congress? How did that play out?

**DL:** Had it easier working with Democrats and with Republicans that are moderate, for people who are open-minded and will listen. And I didn't have a lot of difficulty working with Republicans of that ilk. But if you take a Republican say like Trent Lott, Mississippi, go back to school building infrastructure and so forth, meet with Trent Lott and he saw the NEA as being an evil, almost Communist organization. He didn't put it in those words, those are my words. And here's what he said to me when I walked in the room, and this is awfully close to what he – "Mr. Lestina, you ought to thank God that I have a meeting with you. You ought to get down on your knees and come across the room on your knees just to meet, telling me that I have – take my valuable time to visit with you." And I said, "Mr. Senator, I'm sorry you feel that way but I would like to discuss school building infrastructure in Mississippi with you," and I showed him some of the dilapidated school buildings and that kind of stuff. And he said, "Yeah, we've got schools like that, but it's none of the GD business of the federal government to get involved with that. That's a states' rights issue, and don't you ever think that it is any different from that," you know, that kind of thing. You can't get anywhere with somebody like that.



Now I'm going to jump ahead to today. Today, instead of having that bell-shaped curve that I talked to you, we've got a saddleback curve. You've got the liberals, hardly anything in the middle, and the conservatives are over here. When you've got that kind of a situation, it's next to impossible to sit down and have dinner together, to share common things about family and that kind of stuff and then get into legislative discussions, and it's almost like a hate between the two. In fact, it is in many cases. Distrust.

**VS:** Do you feel like in your time there, the seventies through – you said you left in 2000?

**DL:** Yeah, '99, 2000.

**VS:** Did you see more of that, extremes on both ends happening?

**DL:** See it happening but I never fathomed it would get to this. And I'll tell you the main thing that is the problem. Do you know of an organization called ALEC? Okay. ALEC, very early on, saw the –

(Taping paused)

**DL:** Yes, it got worse. It's worse now, and it just kept on getting worse to the point where it is now. I've got lobbying friends that say it's next to impossible to try to get anything

accomplished or strike a compromise, because the two sides, especially the conservative side, they just won't do it. They will not compromise. And so they just keep saying no, no, no and nothing happens. And then in the public's eye, the whole Congress is a bunch of people that don't know what they're doing, and that they're all incompetent. And so, in the public's eye, the Congress is held in such low esteem, and it's because of the way in which the positions that especially the conservatives take.

What I was saying about ALEC, ALEC, early on represented and understood that the way in which the congressional districts are drawn will in essence give you a conservative or a liberal member, and what they did is they went after that early on. I can remember seeing that and saying to some of the hierarchy in NEA, we've got to get on top of this because this is really going to be bad. Well, it's kind of like, well, that's somebody else's problem. We've got members to serve and things to do. And maybe we couldn't have done anything in the long run anyway, but what that has done is you've got congressional districts that are drawn in such a way that conservatives are in control, and no matter what you do you're not going to change that person's mind because he or she is elected from a clientele that what they're doing is what they want.

And so you've got congressional districts that are just atrocious, and I would think that it would be smart for us to go through the Supreme Court and say a congressional district is drawn and it should be drawn in such a way that a reasonable person would say that, yeah, that's a contiguous district, rather than have something that looks like a salamander

sneaking through, off in all different directions. It's crazy. But the state legislature, they decide, and each state has little different ways in which they go about that. And so especially people who are states' rights-minded, they're going to tell us where we're going to draw those lines. And so that tracks all the way back, pre- Civil War days, when the states' rights is big stuff. Keep the federal government out of it.

**VS:** Just to go a little deeper into this idea and how you saw it changing in your time there, you kind of described an era: NEA wins big with the Department of Education, Reagan comes in and you start to see more of, like you mentioned Trent Lott, more conservative. You get the Contract with America in 1996, I think, Clinton winning in '92, so more into the nineties. Was it becoming harder as you started to see more extremes? In the nineties, I'm guessing, is when you start to see a lot of that in Congress. Was it becoming harder for the NEA to achieve victories?

**DL:** Yes. Tell you what, it fell predominantly around money, money for public education, elementary-secondary in particular, in that Reagan would – he put weights on. You were having to lift in order to – legislative weights – to be successful, and I felt like it was just straining and working and working and working, and finally winning. Then comes the next budget, and the next appropriation budget, and even more weights, more impediments, and more and more. You worked liked everything, you know, and – ah, got it, you know? And so it was almost sadistic, it felt like. But that's what was coming, and now Elementary-Secondary Act hasn't been reauthorized. It's just one continuing

resolution. Continuous, continuous, continuous. Hasn't been updated and so forth.

**VS:** One specific question. This was an incident or event that I read about. In 1994 Hillary Clinton came to speak at the NEA convention, and in her speech – this was around the time that her healthcare was being passed around – and in her speech she asked the NEA to endorse her healthcare plan. And I looked at the resolutions that were passed that year and I think the next year, and there was no mention of endorsing her healthcare plan. So, do you know what happened between A and B there?

**DL:** How long a time was that?

**VS:** Well, the resolutions are passed during the RA, right? Then that's when she spoke, and so was there –

**DL:** Well, I'm kind of on the outside looking in on this particular issue in that during that time NEA did go strong for that healthcare plan legislatively, but that was at the same time in which the Elementary-Secondary Act had to be reauthorized, and so my crew, my people were pulled off and worked almost full time on that.

**VS:** On the Elementary and Secondary Education Act?

**DL:** No, they worked full time on the healthcare. I remember in meetings saying, "Look,

we're the National Education Association, not the National Health Organization, and we've got to." So I was on my own. They let me do NEA as an organization with a heart, and they respect and they let their employees do their thing. And so that's what I was doing, is working that, and of course it got reauthorized, et cetera. But they worked hard on it and then of course it didn't go, and it's unfortunate. It was another priority, but for me the priority was the Elementary-Secondary Act, and I was really in the minority on that.

**VS:** Was this a common problem, where the NEA tried to go beyond its education boundaries, and do you feel like they got too thin with some of their work and ended up missing chances for improving education as a result?

**DL:** No, I don't think so, and I don't think that we – we didn't miss a chance to improve education. It just made for much, much – I was alone. Harder for me to cover all the bases. But by that time, I liked to think I knew what I was doing, I'd just go ahead and did it. In hindsight, yes, but the leadership makes their decision and so that's it, and so I was kind of like an appendage at that time. But no one gave me grief over it at all, and I think that maybe they thought, well, somebody's got to do that, but this is the big thing here, is this health one. That was my perception from my point of view.

**VS:** I found an old C-SPAN video where you showed up talking to the Conference of Mayors, something in like 1988. I don't know if you even remember this, about bipartisan

support for education. There's a video of you on the Internet, and I just wanted to ask about – we've talked a lot about your work with Congress, but did you go out in other government organizations? Did you do kind of lobbying, so to speak, with any other organizations, private organizations or other advocacy organizations?

**DL:** No. Only when you take all these organizations and where their policies overlap, that's where you work, is within that overlap-ness.

**VS:** So there was a natural alliance.

**DL:** Yeah.

**VS:** You didn't have to force-forge an alliance.

**DL:** No, that's right.

[End of interview]